



Late Holocene Environmental Change at Amara West: A New Kingdom Town on the Desert Nile in Northern Sudan

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Amara West is a well-preserved town of the late New Kingdom downstream of Sai Island in Northern Sudan. The town has been identified as the seat of the pharaonic administration of Kush (Upper Nubia) in the Ramesside Period (c. 1306-1070 BC). This region fell under Egyptian control after about 1500 BC. The modern Nile (flowing eastwards in this reach) lies to the south of the town and a well preserved palaeochannel lies immediately to the north. Following the Egypt Exploration Society excavations of 1938-39 and 1947-48, it was argued that the ancient town was once located upon an island in the Nile. Renewed archaeological excavations allied to geomorphological work on the ancient river environment are attempting to establish the nature of the local and regional landscape before, during, and after the occupation of the town. This paper presents new OSL and radiocarbon dates on the sedimentary fill from the palaeochannel system to establish when the channel system ceased to flow on a permanent basis. Micromorphological work on the sedimentary records within the town provide additional insights into the nature of the local environment during the period of occupation. We discuss the implications of the new palaeoenvironmental data for our understanding of Amara West and we set out the wider significance of these new geoarchaeological data.